
International Forum
Vol. 17, No. 2
October 2014
pp. 5-24

FEATURE

**Women Presidents in Philippine Higher Education:
Their Personal and Professional Journeys**

Arceli H. Rosario

***Abstract.** Women leadership is still a rare phenomenon though women have slowly but steadily gained access into leadership positions even of male-dominated disciplines and institutions. Through the phenomenological design and guided by Gottfredson's (1981) circumscription, compromise, and self-creation theory, the lived experiences of 7 women leaders in Philippine higher education revealed the role of home and family, schools and teachers, career paths, and mentors in the development of women's leadership potential. All participants had positive relationships with their parents and other significant persons who instilled in them high regard for education, passion for reading, hard work, and service. Their parents empowered them; hence, they grew up with a strong sense of power to create their future. They excelled in school and were highly involved in extra-curricular activities; had healthy relationships with their teachers; obtained the highest educational qualifications; and benefited from their varied work experiences and mentorship from male and female leaders and colleagues. Their personal and professional journeys led them to the highest leadership post of leading colleges and universities in the country, a calling and a privilege achieved only by a few.*

Keywords: women leaders, higher education, women leadership in the Philippines, phenomenological design, development of women leaders

Introduction

The phenomenon of women leadership, though still rare, has occurred in politics, business, the military, and the academe. Women have slowly but steadily

gained access into boardrooms, courtrooms, and even their country's presidential seats (Carli & Eagly, 2012). In different institutions, a new framework has been accommodated—women leadership (Gillett-Karam, 2001). Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) coined the term *women leadership* to describe a new set of styles and practices such as participatory and democratic (Carli & Eagly, 2012; Eagly & Johnson, 1990), teamwork and consensus (Wajcman, 1996), reconciliatory (Fukuyama, as cited in Hunt, 2007), and transformational leadership (Yaseen, 2010), which are attributed to effective leaders (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). According to Hunt (2007), women's perspectives and talents are needed in top positions. In the academe, women leaders are observed to be accommodating to the needs of students who come from diverse backgrounds (Richardson, 2004; Turner, 2007).

Considering the merits of women leadership, women should be serving in leadership posts. More women should be trained for leadership and more research studies should be undertaken on their leadership development. Oplatka (2006) traced the beginnings of the studies on women leaders in Europe and North America. He observed that very little had been known “about the lives and careers of women in educational administration within developing countries” (para. 2). Madsen (2007a) specified that such research studies should focus on the development of women presidents in higher education. She proposed that the “backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions of women presidents be studied so that commonalities can be discovered” (para. 1). Hence, this study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of women leaders and uncover the antecedents of their leadership development.

Review of the Literature

Filipino women have played important roles in the “development and emergence of the Filipino nation” (*Filipino women*, 2001, para. 1). They “played a highly influential role in Philippine society during the pre-colonial times” (Ellao, 2008, para. 1). During the many revolts for freedom, they not only participated in, but also led, revolutionary movements. In the 21st century, the leadership opportunities given to President Corazon Aquino and President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, two former women presidents, and other notable women in different disciplines and institutions confirm that the Filipino society has accorded considerable respect to the Filipino woman and her leadership potential. Thus, Philippine history “presents a moving tableau of Filipinas asserting their God-given right to participate in the development of community and nation equal with men” (*Filipino women*, 2001, para. 2). Roman (2006), the first woman president of the University of the Philippines in one hundred years, commended the Filipino women for having “come closer to seeing and experiencing gender equality in the country” (para.11). She further insisted on bringing about change in the way

women think of their role in nation building with education as being key in the transformation of the Filipino people.

Studies that have been done on women leadership have focused on different aspects such as the development of women leaders, their leadership styles and practices, the barriers that they face and how they manage them, and their contributions. Since this study attempted to identify the leadership antecedents of presidents of higher education institutions, the review of literature highlights the women's journey to leadership, focusing on their personal and professional relationships and experiences.

Personal Relationships and Experiences

Enduring personal relationships refer to the relationships the woman leader had as a child and as an adolescent. These relationships may be with her father, mother, siblings, relatives, and other persons outside the family. Astin and Leland (as cited in Madsen, 2007b) claimed that "leaders emerge from the critical interplay of personal values and commitments, special circumstances or historical influences, and personal events that motivate and mobilize people's actions" (para. 2).

Influence of parents. In exploring the childhood of women university presidents, Madsen (2007b) found that both parents profoundly influenced the women's growth and development. Buensalido and Florendo (1999) confirm strong parental influence in the lives of Filipino women leaders. Erwin and Harmless (1995) interviewed prominent female leaders who credited their parents as "the most influential forces during formative years" (p. 91), with fathers rating slightly higher than mothers. In addition, the studies conducted by Nelson (2005) and Madsen (2010) affirmed that fathers cast a strong influence on women leaders.

Other studies attribute influence to the mother. The mothers of the participants in Tiao's (2006) study were better educated than their fathers. In addition, the result of the study of Matz (2001) showed that the women who rated their mothers slightly higher than their fathers in instilling in them self-confidence did not lose that self-confidence even in later life. Lim's (2007) study on Filipino women leaders in higher education affirmed the mother's primary influence.

Influence of significant persons. Aside from parents, women leaders also acknowledged significant persons who were either family members or teachers. Most of the women respondents of the study of Stephens (as cited in Madsen, 2007b) acknowledged a single aunt for helping them develop broad perspectives as a woman. The result of Madsen's (2007b) study on women university presidents showed that seven of those women spoke of the positive contributions

their elementary school teachers had on their lives. Eight of Cuomo's (1999) women leaders testified of the positive influence of their teachers. Cuomo (1999) suggests how important the role of a teacher is to a child who is unsure of what he or she can become, that the efforts of even a devoted parent can not be enough to reassure someone "passing through the turbulence of preadolescence" (p. xv) and that there is a need for outside support which is best found in the school.

Critical life events. Enduring personal experiences refer to the critical life events that happened in the life of the participant during her childhood or adolescence which contributed to her career development decisions and molded her leadership qualities. Personal experiences are "critically important to an individual's growth and development" (Madsen, 2007b, para. 12). Hennig and Jardim (as cited in Madsen, 2007b) suggest that the childhood experiences of a person have an essential and enduring effect on her mature life. One can better perform her professional role if she has a high sense of personal history (Madsen, 2007b). Specifically, according to Werner (1995), a difficult childhood is usually a reason for adults manifesting concern to others and maximizing their gifts to bring out the best in themselves. The women leaders' early confrontation with critical events such as death of a parent, poverty, discrimination, and war developed in them attitudes and skills crucial to leadership.

Professional Relationships and Experiences

Professional relationships and experiences that influence the development of women leaders are educational background, career paths, mentors, and networking. These professional relationships refer to those connections that women leaders had formed with teachers and administrators in school, supervisors and colleagues in the workplace, mentors, and other women leaders. Professional experiences refer to their educational background up to the post-graduate level and career path which includes the job assignments they had taken as they moved through the professional ladder.

Educational background. Education is a factor in the development of women leaders and their advancement to leadership positions (Carey, 2002; Gorena, 1994; Moultrie & de la Rey, 2003; Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2010; Turner, 2007). Bynum's (2000) study revealed that education ranks second among the factors the women rated as most important in acquiring a leadership post. The women leaders that Kazerounin (2002) featured in her book had a "strong academic streak" (p. 4). As these women pursued their studies to graduate and post-graduate school, they maintained the same high level of performance. However, while many research studies agree on the importance of education, the study of Ward and Kiruswa (2013) with Maasai women reveals that "education . . . was non-significant, not a clear predictor of the rise to leadership" (p. 7).

One of the factors the researchers proposed was the quality of rural education. Instead, to these Maasai women, mentoring proved to be a predictor.

Career Path. Another factor that impacts the professional development of women is career path. Tiao (2006) concluded that the experiences of women leaders in teaching and administration are indispensable in the effective discharge of their duties as college presidents. Madsen (2007a) also reported that of the ten participants in her study, eight were vice presidents; nine were in the academe with only one in a government leadership post prior to their appointment as presidents. This career trajectory was affirmed by the study of Tiao (2006) since her participants commonly held the posts of vice-president for academic affairs before their appointment to the presidency.

Mentors. Women need mentors (Darden, 2006; Kampel, 2006; Moultrie & de la Rey, 2003; Santee, 2006; Ward & Kiruswa, 2013; Wheat, 2012; Yates, 2005). Mentorship is very important and is a key element in the development of leaders in higher education (Brown, 2005; Kuhnle-Biagas, 2007; VanDerLinden, 2004). Durnovo (as cited in VanDerLinden, 2004) disclosed that women who had not experienced mentoring did not progress to senior administrative posts. On the contrary, those who had mentors occupied higher administrative posts. Hence, having a mentor is key to reaching the top, especially for those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds such as being a woman and/or belonging to a minority ethnic group (Armstrong, 2007; Knouse, 2013).

Networking. Networking is the process of connecting the woman leader with other women leaders and finding support. While a woman leader uses consensus-building, she takes accountability for the decisions made. In some cases, the interplay of interests among the decision makers within the organization and her own lack of experience and insight make it difficult for her to provide direction to arrive at a sound decision. Thus, there is a need for the woman leader to “develop a network of colleagues beyond the school community and seek unbiased, detached professional opinion” (Raymond, 2007, para. 5). In today’s world of technology, Knouse (2013) suggests that women explore networking and mentoring opportunities with professional organizations and potential virtual mentors through e-mails, chats, videoconferencing, and others.

Research Questions

This study explored the lived experiences of women leaders in higher education in the Philippines. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What enduring personal relationships and experiences in childhood and adolescence influenced the development of women leaders?
2. What significant professional relationships and experiences influenced their development as women leaders?

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the theory of Gottfredson (1981) on circumscription, compromise, and self-creation, which explains “the development process leading to the formation of occupation aspirations” of women (Aschenbrenner, 2006, p. 11). Gottfredson’s (1981) theory espouses that it is in the first two decades of a person’s life when she goes through a series of decision-making processes in her choice of a career. Within these 2 decades, she experiences four developmental processes which are cognitive growth, self-creation, circumscription, and compromise. In the cognitive growth process, the child gains understanding of the world around her—of people and occupations, learns to make distinctions and comparisons, and discerns her interests.

The self-creation process espouses that the child develops the ability to self-direct her development. Through her experiences, she is “attracted to or repelled by certain activities” (para. 4). Gottfredson (1981) emphasizes that during this stage, the parents and other significant persons must “optimize experience, both by providing broad menus of vocationally-relevant activities for young people to sample and by promoting self-agency in seeking out formative experiences” (para. 5). During the circumscription stage, the child proceeds through a process of elimination of her early vocational choices. She becomes selective as she develops awareness of “occupational differences in sextype, then prestige, and finally field of work” (para. 6). At the compromise stage, the child realizes that she is confronted with limitations and that not all her choices are possible so she resorts to a compromise and “opt[s] for work in a different field within [her] social space rather than compromise either prestige or sextype of work” (para. 12). In her theory, Gottfredson (1981) emphasizes a woman’s power to create her own self, to become who she wants to be, and to fulfill her occupational desires. Her theory explains how gender and social classification affect career choices.

Research Methodology

This study used the qualitative method, employing the phenomenological design to understand and describe the nature and meaning of the experiences of the participants. Husserl proposes “subjective openness” as an approach to the study of human science (Moustakas, 1994, p. 25). Phenomenology seeks “to describe things in themselves, to permit what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood in its meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection” (p. 27). The in-depth interview provides the participant with a way to describe what she “perceives, senses, and knows” in her “immediate awareness and experience” (p. 26).

Participants

The seven participants of this study were women presidents of colleges and universities in the Philippines. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the participants. To be included, a participant must (a) be holding a presidential position in any accredited college or university in the Philippines; (b) have occupied the presidential post for at least 3 years; (c) be willing to be interviewed, audio-recorded, and video-recorded; shadowed for 1 or 2 days; and share her curriculum vitae or resume, her written works, and works written about her.

Research Instrument

The following research instruments were used: (a) interview questions which were formulated based on an extensive review of the literature and other related instruments, reviewed by two experienced leadership researchers, and modified based on the feedback of the reviewers; (b) the participants' curriculum vitae or resumes; (c) demographic profile survey; (d) written outputs of the participants such as biographies, books, monographs, and others and works written about them; (e) the researcher's journal, where I recorded my observations during the 2-day shadowing period.

Data Collection

To collect data, the participants were identified based on the criteria. When a participant consented verbally, a written consent was obtained. Schedule for the face-to-face interview and shadowing was set. The demographic profile survey and the interview questions were sent to the participants.

During the 2-day shadowing period with a participant, I conducted the interview, which in some cases was split into two sessions. Aside from conducting the interview, I observed the participant as she performed her presidential duties. I recorded my observations in my journal and secured a copy of the participant's curriculum vitae or resume, the completed demographic survey form, copies of speeches and other works of the participant, and materials written about her. The last two sets of documents were limited to those given voluntarily by the participants and which they deemed relevant to the study.

Data Analysis

The main bulk of the data was collected through in-depth interviews. The following steps were taken after the interview was done (Madsen, 2007b). (a) The interviews were transcribed verbatim. (b) Key ideas and phrases were highlighted. (c) Key ideas and phrases were categorized according to themes. (d) Recurring themes or patterns of meaning explicating significant people and

life events were identified and quoted. (e) The participants reviewed what I wrote about them and provided additional insights wherever gaps were found so that the final report reflected accurately the stories of each participant. Triangulation was done by using data from other sources such as the curriculum vitae or resume of the participants, the works of the participants and those written about her, the researcher's journal, and data from the demographic profile survey.

Results and Discussion

The relationships and experiences of the seven participants in their childhood and adolescent years are discussed in this section. Highlighted in the discussion are the influences of those relationships and of the participants' experiences on their development as leaders, their career decisions, and how they discharged their functions as president.

Personal Relationships and Experiences

Six themes emerged from the personal relationships and experiences of the participants. Their personal relationships were those with their parents and other significant persons. Their personal experiences focused on both the pleasant and the unpleasant events that happened during their childhood and adolescence.

Positive relationships with fathers and mothers. All of them attested that their parents provided them love during their childhood and adolescent days, supported them in their studies, and disciplined them when they needed guidance. Throughout the participants' childhood and adolescent days, all of them said they felt loved. Participant 01 summarized the early years of her life as "happy, when I felt loved and affirmed at all times." The positive relationships they enjoyed with their parents extended to their relationships with everyone in the workplace. They exhibited warmth and loving concern toward their subordinates and a collegial attitude toward their peers and superiors. Because of their strong sense of security, the participants did not feel intimidated by the discrimination they encountered in the workplace. Instead, as Eagly and Carli (2007) described, these people provided inspiration and encouragement and a nurturing attitude toward others. Cassidy and Shaver (as cited in Davis, 2003) revealed that adults who experienced secure childhood relationships are better able to relate well with others, find solutions to complex problems, and adjust to new situations.

Equal impact of mothers and fathers. All the participants affirmed that their mothers and fathers equally made an impact in their lives. Madsen (2007b) who explored the childhoods of university women presidents led to the same result that both parents profoundly influenced the women's growth and development. The participants in this study acknowledged the role of their parents in the formation of the qualities which made them effective leaders,

for setting the stage to dream for what they could become, and for providing the support to make their dreams come true.

As they observed their parents perform their different roles, the participants unconsciously imbibed the values by which their parents lived. For example, Participant 05 mentioned that she learned high work ethics from her father who was a university faculty member. She saw him report to work regularly and punctually. Participants 02 and 07 also remembered how dedicated their fathers were to public service. The mother of Participant 03 inspired her to work beyond the required office hours. Influenced by her father, Participant 04 had championed the cause of the underprivileged. She recalled her father putting a P50 bill in the offering plate and paying more than what the shoeshine boy asked for. In addition, Participant 02 recalled how her mother operated a drugstore, involved herself in church activities, and took a lot of young people into their home and sent them to school. For both of her parents, Participant 02 spoke of their legacy of service, industry, and charity work.

Value of education. All the participants were raised in homes that highly valued education. Their parents believed that education would give them better opportunities to develop their potential, wider chances for employment and higher income, and greater prospects for a better life as a whole (Troumpouis, 2004). Three of the participants sought permanent employment only after they had obtained their doctoral degrees while four juggled post-graduate studies, work, and family duties.

The mothers of the participants set them the example that they appreciated their femininity by valuing their roles as mothers and wives while at the same time having a career. Denmark (1993) concurs that mothers should send the message to their daughters that they can do anything they want to do and that they “are entitled to dream of greatness” (p. 348). These women leaders validated Gottfredson’s (1981) theory that women possess the power to create their own selves, to become who they want to be, and to fulfill their occupational desires. Empowerment from their parents and other significant members have inspired them to pursue high levels of education and later venture into leadership (Madsen, 2010; Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2010).

The conviction that education is important influenced their decisions regarding faculty development. All the women leaders pushed for programs to upgrade faculty through seminars, trainings, and further studies in reputable schools in the Philippines and other parts of the world. An outstanding example was Participant 04 who raised scholarship funds to support most of the students of her institution especially those coming from third-world countries.

Influence of other significant persons. Aside from their parents, the participants drew inspiration and guidance from other family members such as grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and cousins. They were also positively

influenced by their teachers. The women respondents in the study of Stephens (as cited in Madsen, 2007b) testified to the positive influence of an aunt in their lives. In addition, the women in the studies of Cuomo (1999) and Madsen (2007b) revealed that they had teachers who provided them love and guidance. These significant persons inculcated in them a passion for reading, good values, and belief and confidence in their abilities.

Happy childhood and adolescent experiences. Most of the participants' childhood and adolescent experiences were happy ones. Their recollections focused on incidents they spent with their parents and siblings and extended family members. Participant 01 reminisced going to the movies with her parents and celebrating holidays with her maternal and paternal families. Participant 02 recalled how her cousins and her aunts shared with her reading materials. Going to church with her family stood out in the mind of Participant 04. Participant 03 fondly remembered summer breaks spent with her relatives in her parents' home province.

Unpleasant experiences. Some of the participants underwent unpleasant experiences. As children, Participants 01 and 02 were sickly. Participants 01 and 07 lost an immediate family member at an early age. Participant 06 suffered from poverty and was bullied by male classmates when she was in high school. All the participants who underwent negative experiences, however, declared that those experiences turned out to have positive effects on them. Werner (1995) disclosed that women leaders who showed concern for others and maximized their potentials had encountered painful experiences in childhood.

The personal experiences of the participants, both positive and negative, proved important to their development. This result was corroborated by the study of Madsen (2007b). From the result of De la Cerna's (2000) study on women leaders, she concluded that "leaders emerge from the interplay of personal values and commitments, special circumstances or historical influences" and that "personal experiences play a powerful role in shaping women leader's core values" (p. 225).

Professional Relationships and Experiences

There are many recurring themes in the professional relationships and experiences of the participants that contributed to their development as women leaders. Their professional relationships and experiences are classified into those that happened in their school life and during their career life.

Love for school. The attitude of all the seven participants toward school was highly positive. Participant 03 preferred to study rather than join a party held at their house. Participant 06 confessed to spending more hours in the library than any other student. The participants' intense interest, their concentrated focus,

and single-mindedness of purpose enabled them to excel. They were awarded either as salutatorian or valedictorian in elementary and high school. In college, two of them graduated *summa cum laude* and one *cum laude*. Two of them topped the national board examinations.

The participants' excellent performance in class translated into trust and confidence of their teachers and classmates. Participant 03 and 06 said they were given leadership opportunities in school because they excelled in class. "As valedictorian of the class, you are asked to be a leader," Participant 02 recalled. Participants 02, 04, 05, and 06 mentioned that they were always the president of their classes. All of them served in different leadership positions in clubs and organizations. The high academic performance and the development of leadership potential of the women leaders in this study were corroborated by the studies of Astin and Leland (1991), Madsen (2010), Shapira, Arar, and Azaiza (2010), and Walberg et al. (1996).

Passion for reading. All the participants were avid readers. Participant 02 said she read anything in sight. The participants read as students; they still read as leaders. The frequent reference of Participants 02 and 03 to authors in their articles attested to their passion for reading. Participant 07 reminisced, "While other children wanted to receive dolls and stuffed toys and candies, for me, books were the perfect gift for every occasion." When she was a child, Participant 07 underwent surgery. The doctor applied only local anesthesia; hence, the pain was intense. To still her crying, her parents bribed her with books. Leaders are readers (Pearson, 2008; Tracy & Chee, 2013). In most cases, readers become leaders (Madsen, 2010). According to Madsen (2010), "Reading is an important component of learning, and learning is an important precursor for effective leadership" (p. 10). Tracy and Chee (2013) even extend reading to listening to educational audio materials and to attendance in seminars and workshops.

Positive relationships with teachers. The women leaders had healthy relationships with their teachers. They described their teachers as affirming, interesting, intelligent. Six of them did not identify a special teacher; they considered all of their teachers special. However, Participant 07 mentioned two teachers who had a special impact on her. The study of Astin and Leland (1991) across three generations of women leaders showed that their most important role models were their teachers in high school and college. The studies of Madsen (2007b) and of Coumo (1999) also validated the positive contributions of teachers on women leaders during their student days. Teachers "influence the quality of students' social and intellectual experiences" (Brophy, as cited in Davis, 2003, p. 208). Holmes (1995) asserts that it is "from the teacher [that] the alluring contours of a Christian mind begin to emerge" (p. 50). He affirms the power of the teacher to shape the students' thought patterns and worldviews

and to influence their choice of ideologies and philosophical underpinnings in the solutions of life's problems. More so, positive teacher-student relationships result in students' better social and academic skills, and higher tolerance toward frustration (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). Thus, the women leaders' positive relationships with their teachers develop in them qualities needed for leadership such as the ability to relate well with others (Yoder, 2001), to analyze the intricacies of administrative problems and provide judicious solutions (Noorshahi & Sarkhabi, 2008), and to handle frustrating situations (Hunt, 2007).

Involvement in extracurricular activities. All the participants were highly involved in extracurricular activities. They recognized the positive impact extracurricular activities had on students especially on their leadership skills and on their motivation to perform well in their studies. As president, Participant 07 strongly supported extracurricular activities and in her institution, planning for those activities was intentional. Like all the other participants, she attested that it was from joining groups that she developed people skills such as communicating and relating with others. Both Participant 07 and Participant 04 were drawn to their area of specialization because of the social action work they did in high school and college. Alleviating the conditions of the marginalized had become their advocacy. Extracurricular activities were valuable to the development of women leaders and those who rose to high leadership positions (Madsen, 2010), especially those who willingly involved themselves in volunteer work and in responsibilities that were not graded or paid and learned from their experiences (Astin & Leland, 1991).

High academic qualifications. All the participants in this study were doctoral degree holders from leading and reputable schools in the country and abroad. They recognized the impact of their educational background. For example, both Participants 01 and 05 valued their training in business administration as relevant to their administrative work. Participant 06 also found her specialization, which was educational administration, useful. While Participants 02 and 03 were trained in chemistry, they had distilled leadership principles from their discipline and applied these principles in their administrative functions. The training of Participants 04 and 07 in sociology prepared them to deal with people and to champion their advocacy in research and extension work.

Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) observed that the women leaders in their study had "formal and extensive academic backgrounds" (p. 223). They concluded that, "the road to leadership begins with education" (p. 225). The women leaders in Legaspi's (2003) and Lim's (2007) studies revealed that they were holders of doctoral degrees. "As academic women, . . . they enhanced their leadership with the theoretical underpinnings and academic skills associated with formal higher education" (Astin & Leland, 1991).

Informal mentorship. Six of the seven participants acknowledged to have been mentored informally. Being observant and discerning, the participants caught lessons that helped them in their leadership responsibilities. Astin and Leland (1991) affirmed that women leaders could learn from observing people whom they admired. For many women leaders, “role modeling is ... a great teacher” (Astin & Leland, 1991, p. 52). For Participant 04, the mentoring style of her mentor had been deliberate and purposeful. According to a Canadian study (Sherman Ann, 2000 as cited in Legaspi, 2003), mentorship, whether active or passive, is “a crucial career tool with positive implications for women and that access to a mentor relationship is essential for women educators who are aspiring to positions in the educational hierarchy” (p. xii).

The mentors of the women in this study were both male and female. Participants’ 02 and 03 had male mentors because their field was male-dominated. The mentors of Participant 04 were males, too. Participant 01 had only one female mentor after a long list of male mentors. This phenomenon is not new. Even the participants in the study of Astin and Leland (1991) were mentored by men. These male leaders, according to Astin and Leland (1991), “were particularly conscious of training women. They believed that it was the women who were going to make it” (p. 52). With this mindset, they gave the women “good training and opportunities” (p. 52). The findings of Astin and Leland (1991) and of this study contradicted with the results of the study of VanDerLinden (2004) and Byrne (as cited in Ehrlich, 1995) that women in the academe miss the opportunities to be mentored due to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of male leaders or on the part of the female leader due to risks of sexual harassment or possible illicit affair.

Career path. The participants’ entry employment was as a faculty member and they took one rung of the ladder at a time until they reached the top. They took the traditional career path with their trajectories focused on higher education. Their career path followed this pattern: from faculty member, to chairperson, to dean, to vice president or vice chancellor for academic affairs, then to the presidency. This was the case of Participants 02, 03, 04, and 07. The study of Moore (as cited in Tiao, 2006) yielded the same result. The entry level of 72% of their participants who were female college presidents was as a faculty position. Regarding the post held prior to the presidential appointment, Tiao (2006) affirmed the findings of this study. Before becoming presidents, her participants served as vice presidents for academic affairs.

Strong network systems. All the participants had strong network systems with people they had worked with and with organizations that championed their advocacies and disciplines. All of them continued to connect with colleagues they had worked with in previous assignments. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) attest that “networking continues to be women’s prime modus operandi in the

work world” (p. 105). Astin and Leland (1991) corroborated with Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) that women leaders need a strong support system. All participants were officers and members of associations and consortia of colleges and universities and benefited from the cooperative exchange of ideas.

Astin and Leland (1991) concluded that women who rise to top executive positions are those who have “consistently positive recollections about family interactions, admired role models, challenging encounters in school, work, and travel” (p. 65). This observation was true of the participants of this study. Most of the time, their memories of their professional experiences and relationships were positive. There were few instances when they encountered unpleasant experiences and relationships but they resolved to learn valuable lessons and rise above their pain. Overall, the women leaders’ relationships and “experiences clearly helped to encourage and shape the development of leadership interests and talents” (p. 65).

Conclusions

Based on the findings and as far as the seven participants were concerned, the following conclusions were formulated.

Personal relationships and experiences influence the career development decisions and the formation of leadership qualities of women leaders. This conclusion affirms the theory of Linda Gottfredson (1981), which advocates that it is during the first two decades of a person’s life that her career choice is determined. In the self-creation process, which is one of the four developmental processes in Gottfredson’s theory, the child develops the ability to self-direct her development. To help the child in the process of self-creation, she must be given varied experiences so she can better fit herself to compatible occupational goals. The parents and other significant persons in this study, as emphasized by Gottfredson (1981), sought out to “optimize experience,” encouraged the child to engage in “formative experiences” (para. 5), and guided them to pursue whatever career they aspired for.

Professional relationships and experiences significantly contribute to the development of women leaders and prepare them for the top leadership post in higher education. This conclusion further affirms Gottfredson’s theory that a person’s exposure to “broad menus of vocationally-relevant activities” such as classroom training and extracurricular activities enable her to choose her occupational goals. Through the process of circumscription, she eliminates less desirable alternatives and chooses more desirable alternatives.

Recommendations

Based on the insights gained from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Women with leadership potential should earn a degree, decide to lead, and continue to grow professionally by pursuing high qualifications and competence, and connecting with support systems and mentors.
2. Parents and significant adults should intentionally create a nurturing environment for girls by spending time with them and attending to their physical and emotional needs. They should design activities that will give the girls meaningful memories of childhood and adolescence. They should model positive values such as a high regard for education, high work ethics, a strong sense of empowerment, and commitment to service. They should choose reputable schools for the girls, provide them study time, encourage them to participate in extra-curricular activities, and nurture in them the passion for reading.
3. School administrators should provide excellent educational training and provide rich and meaningful extra-curricular activities to their students. They should hire teachers who are highly qualified, affirming, interesting, and intelligent.
4. Experienced men and women leaders should recognize the importance of investing time and effort in potential women leaders by voluntarily mentoring them and including these women in their network systems.
5. Further research should be conducted on the lived experiences of women leaders in government posts, religious groups, industrial organizations, and other institutional types.

References

- Aburdene, P. & Naisbitt, J. (1992). *Megatrends for women*. New York, NY: Villard Books.
- Armstrong, L. (2007, Jun/Jul). Paths to power. *Working Mother*, 30, 79.
- Aschenbrenner, L. L. (2006). *Rising to the top: The personal and professional journeys of four Hispanic women leaders in higher education*. (Order No.3229049, Iowa State University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 146-146p. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305316723?accountid=42729>. (305316723).

- Astin, H. S. & Leland, C. (1991). *Women of influence, women of vision: A cross-generational study of leaders and social change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bloom, C. M. (2001). *Critical race theory and the African American woman principal: Alternative portrayals of effective leadership practice in urban schools*. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (7), 227A. Retrieved from <http://proquest.imo.com/pqdweb?did=725905771&sid=4&Fmt=2&clientId=6342>
- Buensalido, J. & Florendo, A. (1999). *100 women of the Philippines*. Makati City, Philippines: Buensalido & Associates.
- Bynum, V. (2000). *An investigation of female leadership characteristics*. (Order No. 9990824, Capella University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. 118-118 p. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304673051?accountid+42729>. (304673051).
- Carey, S. R. (2002). *Success and resiliency: African American women administrators' survival in the academy*. (Order No. 3058688, Vanderbilt University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 122-122 p. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305487388?accountid=42729>. (305487388).
- Carli, L. L., & Eagly, A. H. (2012). Leadership and gender. In D. V. Day & J. Antonakis (Eds.), *The nature of leadership* (pp. 437-476). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cuomo, M. R. (1999). *The person who changed my life*. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group.
- Davis, H. A. (2003). Conceptualizing the role and influence of student-teacher relationships on children's social and cognitive development. *Educational Psychologist*, 31, 4, 207-234.
- De la Cerna, M. (2000). *Towards developing Philippine feminist leadership: Articulations and experiences of selected women leaders* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of the Philippines, Quezon City, Philippines.
- Denmark, F. L. (1993). Women, leadership, and empowerment. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 17, 343-356.
- Eagly, A. H. & Carli, L. L. (2007). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Eagly, A. H., & Johnson, B. T. (1990). Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 233-56.

- Ehrich, L. C. (1995). Professional mentoring for women educators in government schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 33(2), 69.
- Ellao, J. A. (2008). *Women workers in the struggle*. Retrieved from <http://www.bulatlat.com/2008/05/women-workers-struggle>
- Erwin, B. R., & Harmless, K. W. (1995). Women in leadership... the future edge. In B. J. Irby & G. Brown (Eds.), *Women as school executives: Voices and visions* (pp.90-92). Austin, TX: Sam Houston.
- Filipino women in politics and governance*. (2001). Retrieved August 14, 2008, from <http://www.kababaihan.org/>
- Gillet-Karam, R. (2000). Introduction: Community college leadership: Perspective of women as presidents. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 25(3), 167-170.
- Gorena, M. (1994). *Hispanic women in higher education administration: Factors that positively influence or hinder advancement to leadership positions*. (Order No. 9416460, The George Washington University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 389-389 p. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304097190?accountid=42729>. (304097190).
- Gottfredson, L. S. (1981). Circumscription and compromise: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology Monograph*, 28, 545-579.
- Holmes, A. S. (1995). *The idea of a Christian college*. Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Hunt, S. (2007, May/June). Let women rule. *Foreign Affairs*, 86, 109.
- Jogulu, U. D., & Wood, G. J. (2006). The role of leadership theory in raising the profile of women in management. *Equal Opportunities International*, 25, 236-250.
- Kazerounian, N. (2002). *Women's guide to career development*. London, UK: McGraw-Hill International.
- Knouse, S. B. (2013). Mentoring for Hispanics. *Review of Business*, 33(2), 80-90. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1471854143?accountid=42729>
- Legaspi, N. P. (2003). *Leadership style and goal attainment of women managers of higher education institutions in Panay* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of San Agustin, Iloilo City.

- Lim, L. B. (2007). *Filipino women in higher education qualifications, experiences and challenges leading to presidency in non-sectarian colleges and universities* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.
- Madsen, S. R. (2010). The experiences of UAE women leaders in developing leadership early in life. *Feminist Formations*, 22(3), 75-95. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/859360900?accountid=42729>
- Madsen, S. (2007). Developing leadership: Exploring childhoods of women university presidents. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(1), 99-118.
- Madsen, S. R. (2007). Women university presidents: Career paths and educational backgrounds. *Academic Leadership, The Online Journal*, 5(1). Retrieved from http://www.academicleadership.org/emprical_research/Women_University_Presidents_Career_Paths_and_Educational_Backgrounds.shtml
- Matz, I. (2001). *Women leaders: Their styles, confidence, and influences*. (Order No.3022916, The Claremont Graduate University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 342-342. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/251736665?accountid=42729>. (251736665).
- Moultrie, A., & Dela Rey, C. (2003). South African women leaders in higher education: Professional development needs in a changing context. *McGill Journal of Education*, 38(3), 407-421.
- Montinola, L. (1996). *Breaking the silence*. Diliman, Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. London, UK: Sage.
- Naisbitt, J. & Aburdene, P. (1990). *Megatrends 2000*. New York, NY: William Morrow.
- Nance, M. (2006). ACE conference: More research needed on experiences of minority women leaders. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 23, 21.
- Nelson, J. (2005). *Leader Perceptions of Paternal Influence on Personal Leadership Development*. (Order No. 3167328, Cardinal Stritch University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 232-232. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305384521?accountid=42729>. (305384521).
- Noorshahi, N., & Sarkhabi, M. Y. D. (2008). A study of relationship between consequences of leadership and transformational leadership style of the presidents of Iranian universities and institutions of higher education. Retrieved from *The Academic Leadership Journal: The Online Journal*, 6(2), 7. <http://www.academicleadership.org/cgi-bin/coet/acadorg/artman2/search.cgi?action=search&page=22perpage=5&template=articleLists/categoryIndex.html&categoryNum=19&includeSubcats=1>

- Oplatka, I. (2006). Women in educational administration within developing countries: Towards a new international research agenda. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 44, 604-624.
- Pearson, J. (2008). Great leaders are readers: Five lifelong learning principles for leaders and new team members. *Employment Relations Today*, 35(3), 1. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/237055176?accountid=42729>.
- Pianta, R. C. & Steinberg, M. (1992). Teacher-child relationships and the process of adjusting to school. In R. C. Pianta (Ed.), *Beyond the parent: The role of other adults in children's lives* (pp. 61-80). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Richardson, A. (2004). *Characteristics Related to Female and Male Leaders*. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1158525871&sid=10&Fmt=2&clientId=63427&RQT=309&VName=PQD>
- Roman, E. R. (2006, March). Speech during the Opening of Exhibit on 1st Women in Philippine Government CEDAW NG BAYAN: Karapatan at Kababaihan, CSC (Civil Service Commission), Manila, Philippines.
- Shapira, T., Arar, K., & Azaiza, F. (2010). Arab women principals' empowerment and leadership in Israel. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 48(6), 704-715. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578231011079566>
- Tan, D. (2002). *Daughters of Asia*. Singapore, Singapore: Flame of the Forest.
- Tiao, N. (2006). *Senior women leaders in higher education: Overcoming barriers to Success* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). East Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan.
- Tracy, B., & Chee, P. (2013). *Twelve disciplines of leadership excellence: How leaders achieve sustainable high performance*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Troumpoucis, P. (2009). Women reap more benefits from higher education, study finds. Retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0DXK/is_10_21/ai_n6145365/
- Turner, C. S. V. (2007). Pathways to the presidency: Biographical sketches of women of color firsts. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77, 1.
- VanDerLinden, K. E. (2004, Spring). Gender differences in the preparation and promotion of community college administrators. *Community College Review*. Retrieved from <http://find.galegroup.com/itx/retrieve.do?contentSet=IAC-Documents&resultListType=RE>
- Wajcman, J. (1996). Desperately seeking differences: Is management style gendered? *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 34, 333-349.

- Ward, J. A., & Kiruswa, S. (2013). Rise to leadership: An evaluation of African Maasai women's leadership. *Journal of International Business Research*, 12(2), 109-120. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1465394692?accountid=42729>
- Werner, E. E. (1995). Resilience in development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4(3), 81-85.
- Wheat, C. A. (2012). *Women's pathways to the university presidency: A qualitative inquiry into university women leaders' career paths and presidential aspirations*. (Order No. 3534841, The University of Southern Mississippi). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 579. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1277602938?accountid=42729>. (1277602938).
- Yase en, Z. (2010). Leadership styles of men and women in the Arab world. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, 3(1), 63-70. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17537981011022823>
- Yoder, J. D. (2001). Making leadership work more effectively for women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4), 815-828.

Arceli H. Rosario, PhD
Associate Professor
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies
Silang, Cavite, Philippines
rosarioa@aiias.edu